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CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS
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fact sheet
Congress

WOMEN IN THE U.S. CONGRESS

In 1986, women hold a total of **25** seats in the U.S. Congress--**2** in the Senate and **23** in the House of Representatives. This is the largest number of women ever to serve in Congress, one more than served in 1983-84. Women hold **4.7%** of the **535** total available seats--**2.0%** of Senate seats and **5.3%** of House seats.

The two women currently serving in the U.S. Senate are **Nancy Landon Kassebaum** (R-KS), elected in 1978 and re-elected in 1984, and **Paula Hawkins** (R-FL), elected in 1980. They are the first two women ever elected to the Senate without having first filled unexpired Congressional terms.

The women in the House of Representatives include **12** Democrats and **11** Republicans. They are:

Helen Delich Bentley, R-MD
Corinne (Lindy) Boggs, D-LA
Barbara Boxer, D-CA
Sala Burton, D-CA
Beverly Byron, D-MD
Cardiss Collins, D-IL
Bobbi Fiedler, R-CA
Marjorie Holt, R-MD
Nancy Johnson, R-CT
Marcy Kaptur, D-OH
Barbara Bailey Kennelly, D-CT
Marilyn Lloyd, D-TN
Cathy Long, D-LA
Lynn Martin, R-IL
Jan Meyers, R-KS
Barbara Mikulski, D-MD
Mary Rose Oakar, D-OH
Margaret Roukema, R-NJ
Claudine Schneider, R-RI
Patricia Schroeder, D-CO
Virginia Smith, R-NE
Olympia Snowe, R-ME
Barbara Vucanovich, R-NV

A total of **119** women have served in the U.S. Congress to date, including **15** in the Senate and **105** in the House. Only **one** woman--**Margaret Chase Smith** (R-ME)--served in both the House and the Senate. After filling her deceased husband's seat in the House, she was later elected to the Senate, where she served four terms.

The first woman in the House of Representatives was **Jeannette Rankin** (R-MT), who served from 1917 to 1919 and again from 1941 to 1942. The first woman to serve in the Senate was **Rebecca Latimer Felton** (D-GA), who was appointed in 1922 to complete the term of a senator who died in office. Senator Felton was a member of the Senate for only one day before giving up her seat to the man who was elected to fill the vacancy.

New York has had more women in its congressional delegation than any other state--a total of twelve to date, all in the House. **Illinois** and **California** have each sent eight women to the House; **Maryland** has had six and **Connecticut** and **New Jersey** have had five women in their House delegations. Four states--**Alabama, Louisiana, Nebraska,** and **South Dakota**--have been represented twice by women in the Senate. Ten states have never sent a woman to either the House or the Senate.

The first black woman to serve in the Congress was **Shirley Chisholm** (D-NY), elected in 1968. Since that time, four other black women, all Democrats, have served in the House. They are **Yvonne Brathwaite Burke** (D-CA) and **Barbara Jordan** (D-TX), both of whom served from 1973-1979, **Katie Hall** (D-IN), who served from 1983-1985 and **Cardiss Collins** (D-IL), elected in 1973, who is still in Congress. Only one Asian-American woman, **Patsy Takemoto Mink** (D-HI), ever served in the House. No other women of color have served in either house of Congress.

Seven women have chaired congressional committees--Senator **Hattie Caraway** (D-AR), and Representatives **Martha Griffiths** (D-MI), **Mae Nolan** (R-CA), **Mary Norton** (D-NJ), **Caroline O'Day** (D-NY), **Edith Rogers** (R-MA), and **Leonor Sullivan** (D-MO). No woman has ever been Speaker of the House or Majority or Minority Leader of the Senate.

In 1977, the Congresswomen's Caucus was established to support legislation affecting women and to monitor federal government programs that influence the opportunities available to women. At first, the Caucus was limited to women elected to Congress, but in 1981 it changed its name to the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues and admitted male members of Congress as well. The Women's Research and Education Institute was established by the Caucus to provide research, educational and technical support.

Data from the National Information Bank on Women in Public Office, a service of the Center for the American Woman and Politics; additional information drawn from Women in the United States Congress, Barbara L. Schwemle, Congressional Research Service, April 1983. NIB is partially supported by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation.

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WOMEN IN THE U.S. CONGRESS 1917-1985*

CONGRESS	DATES	# OF WOMEN IN HOUSE	# OF WOMEN IN SENATE	TOTAL # OF WOMEN
65th	1917-1919	1	0	1
66th	1919-1921	0	0	0
67th	1921-1923	3	1	4
68th	1923-1925	1	0	1
69th	1925-1927	3	0	3
70th	1927-1929	5	0	5
71st	1929-1931	9	0	9
72nd	1931-1933	7	1	8
73rd	1933-1934**	7	1	8
74th	1935-1936	6	2	8
75th	1937-1938	6	3	9
76th	1939-1941	8	1	9
77th	1941-1942	9	1	10
78th	1943-1944	8	1	9
79th	1945-1946	11	0	11
80th	1947-1948	7	1	8
81st	1949-1951	9	1	10
82nd	1951-1952	10	1	11
83rd	1953-1954	12	3	15
84th	1955-1956	17	1	18
85th	1957-1958	15	1	16
86th	1959-1960	17	2	19
87th	1961-1962	18	2	20
88th	1963-1964	12	2	14
89th	1965-1966	11	2	13
90th	1967-1968	11	1	12
91st	1969-1971	10	1	11
92nd	1971-1972	13	2	15
93rd	1973-1974	16	0	16
94th	1975-1976	19	0	19
95th	1977-1978	18	2	20
96th	1979-1980	16	1	17
97th	1981-1982	21	2	23
98th	1983-1984	22	2	24
99th	1985-1986	23	2	25

*Number shown is maximum number of women who served in that Congress. Not all served full terms; some were elected or appointed to fill out others' unexpired terms.
**Beginning with the 73rd Congress, terminating date listed is date that Congress adjourned.